

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 331 148

EA 022 887

AUTHOR Crispeels, Janet; And Others
TITLE Home and School, Partners in Student Success: A Handbook for Principals and Staff.
INSTITUTION San Diego City Schools, CA. Community Relations and Integration Services Div.
PUB DATE Sep 90
NOTE 67p.; Cover title varies slightly.
AVAILABLE FROM Parent Involvement Department, San Diego City Schools, 4100 Normal Street, Room 2109, San Diego, CA 92103 (\$10.00).
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Responsibility; *Administrator Role; Board of Education Policy; Change Strategies; Educational Finance; Educational Responsibility; Elementary Secondary Education; *Parent Influence; *Parent Participation; Parents as Teachers; *Parent School Relationship; *Parent Teacher Cooperation; Participative Decision Making; School Responsibility; Teacher Responsibility

ABSTRACT

After reviewing the San Diego (California) City Schools Board of Education policy on parent involvement and outlining responsibilities of principals, teachers, and school support staff regarding parent involvement, this document summarizes the benefits of parent involvement for students, parents, and teachers as indicated by related research and describes five types of parent involvement. Emphasizing the principal's role in promoting home-school collaboration, this document lists assumptions that hinder or facilitate such collaboration and offers suggestions for creating a vision of greater parent involvement. Five categories of strategies for implementing home-school partnerships at the elementary, middle, and high school levels are presented, with specific goals, examples, and expected outcomes provided for each. Actions to include or avoid when involving parents are listed, and numerous solutions are described for each of five problems encountered in home-school collaboration. Last, a five-step planning process for developing home-school partnerships is described, and financial support for parent involvement is discussed. Appended is a Home-School Partnership Planner consisting of Vision Worksheets, assessment forms, communication checklists, and a Parent Involvement Component Planning Sheet. (CLA)

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A Handbook for Principals and Staff

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Parent Involvement Programs
Community Relations and Integration Services Division
San Diego City Schools

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Parent Involvement Programs and
Extended Day Magnet Programs*

HOME AND SCHOOL PARTNERS IN STUDENT SUCCESS

A Handbook for Principals and Staff

Parent Involvement Programs
Community Relations and Integration Services Division
San Diego City Schools
4100 Normal Street, Room 2109
San Diego, CA 92103
Telephone: 619-293-8560

Prepared by :

Janet Chrispeels
Beatrice Fernández
Jeana Preston

©March 1990
Revised September 1990

Acknowledgements

The Parent Involvement Programs Department wishes to sincerely thank the following people for generously contributing their time to read and make suggestions for strengthening this handbook.

Judith Ernst, Principal
Birney Elementary School

Dr. Charles Freeburn, Principal
Farb Middle School

David LeMay, Principal
Crawford High School

Dennis Doyle, Principal
Torrey Pines Elementary School

María García, Principal
Baker Elementary School

Carol Leighty, Director
Integration Support Services

Margarita Pérez-García, Resource Teacher
Magnet Programs

Katie Klumpp
PTA Project HOPE

Cathy Smith, Secretary
Community Relations and Integration Services Division

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Part **I** **PARENT INVOLVEMENT**
San Diego City Schools
Board Policy

The Board of Education Policy

History

Research indicates that school policies, programs, and practices make a difference in how involved parents will be in their children's education. Therefore, the San Diego City Schools Community Relations and Integration Services Division created a Parent Involvement Task Force to assist the district in developing a policy and plan of action. The task force is a broad based group of parents, parent group leaders, community representatives, and district and site administrative, teaching and support staff that met for many months to address the basic question:

"What do schools need to do to build strong partnerships with parents that increase parental support for their children's school success?"

As a result of their deliberations, the task force developed a board approved district policy on parent involvement (the first in the state) and a three-year implementation plan. In addition, a Parent Involvement Programs Department was established to assist schools in building home-school partnerships.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT POLICY STATEMENT

The Board of Education recognizes the necessity and value of parent involvement to support student success and academic achievement. In order to assure collaborative partnerships between parents and schools, the board, working through the administration, is committed to:

- a. involving parents as partners in school governance including shared decision making.
- b. establishing effective two-way communication with all parents, respecting the diversity and differing needs of families.
- c. developing strategies and programmatic structures at schools to enable parents to participate actively in their children's education.
- d. providing support and coordination for school staff and parents to implement and sustain appropriate parent involvement from kindergarten through grade twelve.
- e. utilizing schools to connect students and families with community resources that provide educational enrichment and support.

What Does the Policy Mean?

The policy means that:

- ✓ Parent involvement is recognized as one school improvement strategy that increases student achievement.
- ✓ Schools should develop a comprehensive home-school partnership process that provides many ways for parents and school staff to collaborate as:
 - communicators of their ideas and concerns;
 - supporters of children and the school;
 - learners about school programs, family cultures, children's progress;
 - teachers of children and of each other; and,
 - advisors, advocates, and decision makers.
- ✓ School and teacher attitudes and actions affect the level and type of parent involvement.
- ✓ The Board of Education and district administration are committed to supporting school site efforts and actions.
- ✓ District resources will be organized and distributed in ways that enhance school site programs.
- ✓ Training and support must be provided to parents and school staff to help each group acquire the unique and common skills needed to develop a partnership.
- ✓ Schools should link school and community resources in ways that will better meet the needs of families.

What is Parent Involvement?

While most people support parent involvement, they all have different ideas of what it is. The ideal way for home and school to relate to each other is as partners—partners in the commitment to support the growth, development, and education of children, and partners in what they do to make it happen. In this partnership, there are roles that are shared by home and school.

*Katie Klumpp
PTA Project HOPE*

Responsibilities of Principals, Teachers, and Support Staff

Principal

1. Share the parent involvement policy with staff (including custodial, clerical and paraprofessional) and parents.
2. Assess, in conjunction with school staff and parents who are representative of the school community, the extent and scope of current parent involvement activities and needs. Use the Partnership Planner assessment tools or previous integration/school improvement surveys.
3. Work with staff and parents (especially leaders of key parent groups) to brainstorm possible activities and actions that are consistent with the parent involvement policy and incorporate into the existing school site plan.
4. Work with staff and parents to identify resources (people, material, and financial) that will be needed to implement planned parent involvement activities and programs.
5. Coordinate all site level parent involvement activities to ensure that a comprehensive plan is developed which supports school goals.
6. Allocate time and resources to ensure effective implementation of planned programs.
7. Organize workshops and discussion sessions for school staff to increase their skills in communicating and collaborating with parents and arrange for teachers to share successful strategies with each other.
8. Monitor implementation of the plan.
9. Evaluate with parents and staff the impact and effectiveness of programs, activities, and events.

Teachers

1. Learn everything possible about how to effectively communicate and collaborate with parents by attending school and district workshops, sharing ideas with colleagues, learning another language, and using available resources.
2. Treat all parents and community members with respect, be sensitive to cultural differences among parents, and assume that all parents want the best for their children.
3. Get the year off to a good start by communicating early and positively with parents of students in

your class or classes and continuing these positive contacts throughout the year.

4. Keep parents regularly informed of their child's progress and growth.
5. Invite parents to observe your classroom.
6. Conference with parents, help them feel welcome and express your confidence that their child can succeed in school. Share what their child has learned in your class, and work with them on solving only **one** problem at a time.
7. Be sure parents are aware of class/school discipline and homework policies and follow through with your own procedures.
8. Give two types of assignments: homework and home learning activities. Give homework regularly and be sure that it can be successfully completed by the student with minimal parental guidance, that it is related to class work, and that students/parents receive feedback on completed assignments.
9. Assign occasional home learning activities that involve parents and students working together (e.g. students interviewing parents, watching and discussing a TV show, or reading and discussing a newspaper article together).
10. Invite parents to be involved in home learning activities by providing materials and suggestions or conducting a training workshop for parents.
11. Invite parents to volunteer and to share hobbies, skills, or their profession with students—on a one-time or ongoing basis.

Counselors and Nurse

1. Learn everything possible about how to effectively communicate and collaborate with parents by attending school and district workshops, sharing ideas with colleagues, learning another language, and using available resources.
2. Treat all parents and community members with respect, be sensitive to cultural differences among parents and assume that all parents want the best for their children.
3. Solve problems with parents; help them recognize and clearly understand all the options available to help them and their children.
4. Be as flexible as possible when scheduling appointments with parents.
5. Conduct home visits to discuss parents' concerns.
6. Make sure, when helping students develop their four-year high school plan, parents and their children understand all the requirements needed for college attendance even if the students and

7. Work with students and parents to set challenging goals, not to take a minimal high school program that will close career opportunities in the future.

Office Staff

1. Always greet parents in a warm and welcoming manner.
2. Create an office atmosphere that makes parents feel comfortable, reminds them of the school's mission, and provides them with a pleasant place to wait (e.g. student work displayed on the wall).
3. Provide parents with materials to view while waiting which inform them about school programs. This might include a collection of students' stories and writing samples, a copy of the school plan, the latest school newsletter, school goals and objectives, grade level or course objectives, and a volunteer sign-up sheet.
4. Answer parent questions face to face or on the telephone in ways that help them learn how the school operates (e.g. "The principal can't talk with you now because every morning from 8:30 to 9:30 he observes classrooms to be able to give guidance and support to teachers," or "I send messages to classrooms during recess or lunch so that learning time is not lost through interruptions.")
5. If no one on the staff speaks the home languages of students, have a back-up plan, such as designated student interpreters, printed materials in the languages of the parents, paraprofessionals that can come to the office to translate, or volunteer parents that may be willing to serve as interpreters.

Custodial Staff and Cafeteria Workers

1. Help parent visitors or volunteers at the school feel welcome and let them know the school belongs to them.
2. Help volunteers become knowledgeable about the school campus and other rules and regulations that will help them do their job.
3. Help community, parents, and students feel pride in the school by becoming involved in campus beautification projects.
4. Work with school staff to establish days when parents can enjoy lunch with their child or serve an occasional lunch to parent volunteers.
5. Join other staff members in recognizing parent volunteers.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Part **II** Building Staff Capacity/
Preparing Staff for Involving Parents

Summary of Parent Involvement Research

Sharing the research on parent involvement is an important **first step** in building staff capacity for parent involvement. This information can help teachers understand why parent involvement is important and what role they play.

One of the most important findings for teachers is that their initiative to reach parents makes a difference in terms of student achievement. Research by Joyce Epstein and Henry Becker showed that reading achievement improved when teachers treated all parents as if they wanted to be involved (even when all parents did not or could not respond), when they focused on positive communication with parents, and when they gave parents suggestions on how they could help with reading or other language activities at home.

Other benefits for students were:

- ✓ fewer behavior problems
- ✓ more positive attitudes about homework
- ✓ more homework completed, especially on weekends
- ✓ more positive attitudes toward school
- ✓ less absenteeism
- ✓ more connection between home and school

Benefits to parents were:

- ✓ appreciation of teacher's efforts to inform them about the instructional program
- ✓ ideas from teachers on how to help their children
- ✓ a feeling they should help their children
- ✓ greater understanding of the instructional program
- ✓ increased ability to help their children
- ✓ confidence in the teacher's interpersonal skills and overall teaching ability

Benefits for teachers were:

- ✓ higher student achievement
- ✓ more homework completed and returned
- ✓ happier students and less behavior problems
- ✓ more support from parents both at school and at home

When teachers communicated selectively and only about problems and student failures, none of these positive benefits were realized. In contrast, when teachers reached out to all parents—students, parents, and teachers—were clearly the winners.

Parents who themselves are well educated tend to engage in many activities that support student achievement regardless of school actions. However, school attitudes, policies, and actions are very important for many lower socioeconomic status parents who want to be involved but are less sure what to do to help their children be successful in school. Schools make the difference in reaching parents who have not typically been actively involved in their children's education.

Research confirms that a comprehensive approach to parent involvement increases the amount and quality of parent involvement. It also shows that parent involvement is important at all levels of schooling—elementary, middle/junior high and high school. (Some important points that need to be made are summarized below in "What Does The Research Show?" This sheet can be duplicated and shared with both teachers and parents.)

What Does The Research Show?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools can, through POLICIES and ACTIONS, reach out to parents to help them be involved in the education of their children. • Involving parents in the education of their children has a POSITIVE effect on STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT. • Parent involvement is most beneficial when it is WELL-PLANNED, SYSTEMATIC, LONG LASTING, and when parents play many roles. • While all forms of parent involvement are desirable, HOME-BASED PARENT INVOLVEMENT (doing home-learning activities coordinated with children's classwork and providing enrichment activities) appears to be the most valuable in regard to student achievement. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents whose involvement is actively sought by teachers have more POSITIVE attitudes about their children's schools and teachers. • TEACHER'S INITIATIVE and willingness to reach out to parents are key factors for effective parent involvement. • Parent involvement is an UNDERUTILIZED resource for the enhancement of student achievement. • Socioeconomic status and lack of education have NO EFFECT on the willingness of parents to help their own children. |
|---|--|

Home-School Partnership Framework

Defining Types of Parent Involvement

The following chart builds on the five types of parent involvement outlined in the San Diego City Schools board policy on parent involvement. A comprehensive plan for parent involvement needs to address these five types of partnership activities:

1. Home and School as Communicators
Home and school communication is the foundation for all other forms of parent involvement. It is the two way exchange of information between families and schools needed to support student success in school.
2. Home and School as Supporters
Family and school support for the well being of children is basic. Action is taken at home and at school to ensure that each child's physical, emotional, social, and health needs are met. The school links parents to needed community resources, and parents carry out such school recommendations. Parent support for their child's education and for the school increases the potential for student success. Families provide support by supplying an environment at home that encourages learning, by volunteering at the school, by attending school events and activities, and by raising funds for school programs. School staff spends volunteer time and effort supporting school activities and serving on school committees.
3. Home and School as Learners
Improved collaboration is dependent upon mutual opportunities to learn. Staff members need to learn more effective strategies for working and communicating with parents. Staff and parents need to learn about the cultures represented in their school communities, and about cross cultural issues. Parents need to learn about school programs, their child's progress in school, parenting skills, and learning activities they can do at home.
4. Home and School as Teachers
Both teachers and parents play critical roles in fostering student learning. Families are assisted in their teaching role through opportunities to share their knowledge and skills in the classroom and by being provided learning activities they can do at home. Parents also teach when they share their culture and knowledge of their child with the school staff.
5. Home and School as Advisors, Advocates, Decision Makers
Both home and school need to share in shaping school policies and making educational decisions on behalf of children.

Creating a Vision for Parent Involvement

Levels of parent involvement and home-school collaboration differ from school to school. More important than the socioeconomic status of the community in determining levels of involvement are the attitudes of the principals and teachers toward parents. The principal is the key and must be the first one to declare a commitment to increase home-school collaboration.

To build the staff's capacity and prepare them for parent involvement, the school staff needs to examine the norms, values, beliefs, and assumptions that are currently facilitating or hindering home-school collaboration.

ASSUMPTIONS	
<i>Hindering Collaboration</i>	<i>Facilitating Collaboration</i>
Parents who don't attend school events don't care about their child's school success.	Not all parents can come or feel comfortable coming to school; that doesn't mean they don't care.
Parents who are illiterate, non-English speaking or unemployed can't help their children.	All families have strengths/skills they can contribute to their child's school success.
Parent activists take time away from essential duties of the principal.	Parent activists are important community leaders who can help the school improve.
Parents from different ethnic and racial groups don't understand how to help their children.	Parents from different ethnic and racial groups have alternative and important ways of supporting their children.
It is up to parents to find out what is going on at school.	Schools have a responsibility to reach out to parents.
Parent involvement is not worth the effort.	Parent involvement is an effort that pays off in improved student achievement, improved school effectiveness, and increased parent and community support for education.

What are the values, beliefs, assumptions at your school that limit or support parent involvement and home-school collaboration?

A Vision Is What Can and Should Be

Attitudes and beliefs change slowly over time. They are more likely to change when preceded by actions. Creating a vision of what parents and school staff want parent involvement to be at their school site is an important first step in creating a culture conducive to home-school collaboration.

Here is what principals can do:

1. Bring staff and parents together to brainstorm what they feel home-school collaboration can and should be. Use the information in this handbook for partnership ideas and strategies.
2. Identify strengths and gaps in current home-school partnership efforts. Use the assessment forms from the Home-School Partnership Planner.
3. Create a vision based on the five types of home-school collaboration. Use the vision planning form from the Home-School Partnership Planner.
4. Make the vision real by taking actions based on the vision. Use the component planning worksheets from the Home-School Partnership Planner and add the pages to your existing site-based school improvement plan.

What Is Strategic Planning?

Strategic planning is the process by which the guiding members of an organization envision its future and develop the necessary procedures and operations to achieve that future. The envisioning process is very different from long-range planning — the simple extrapolation of statistical trends or forecasts — and it is more than attempting to anticipate the future and prepare accordingly. Envisioning involves a belief that the aspect of the future can be influenced and changed by what one does now.

*"Understanding Applied Strategic Planning: A Manager's Guide"
Pfeiffer, Goodstine, & Nolan
University Associates, 1985.*

Coaching Staff for Parent Involvement

The board policy recognizes that few teachers have had courses or training opportunities in how to collaborate and communicate effectively with parents. Training and support for staff will be necessary if home-school partnerships are to be strengthened. Principals can help build staff capacity in several important ways.

1. Ask teachers and other staff members to identify areas in which they would like to have training or help. Some topics might include training in conferencing skills (including telephone conferencing), conducting home visits, designing effective homework or home learning activities, developing written communications, using volunteers in the classroom, understanding the culture of families from diverse backgrounds, etc.
2. Consider making parent involvement and home-school partnership a focus for staff development or for meeting the site Race/Human Relations objectives.
3. Identify staff members who are skilled in working with parents and who can serve as "mentors" to others. Encourage teachers to apply as official mentor teachers based on their parent involvement skills.
4. Devote time at staff, grade level, or department chair meetings to share what works in communicating and working with parents.
5. Use School Improvement or Chapter 1 funds to release a teacher part time to serve as a parent involvement specialist.
6. Explore with staff members schoolwide initiatives that would assist them (e.g. preprinted post-cards or notes, homework folders, assignment calendars, study skills materials, grade level telephone message systems, grade level or course handbooks with objectives, expectancies, and tips on how parents can help).
7. Recognize teachers and other staff members who are collaborating and communicating effectively with parents. Encourage PTA or other parent groups to thank and recognize teachers and support staff members for their parent involvement efforts.

Part **III** PARENT INVOLVEMENT
Developing Home-
School Partnerships

Strategies for Implementing Partnerships: Elementary, Junior High/Middle, and High School

1. Home and School *Communication* Strategies

Goal: Design more effective ways to exchange information and reach all parents.

EXAMPLES		
Elementary	Middle/Jr. High	High School
Teachers conduct conferences with every parent at least once a year, with follow-up as needed.	Teachers conduct planning/goal setting conferences with their advisory students and parents during the first six weeks of school.	Teachers divide student lists so that every parent receives a phone call from one of their child's teachers.
Teachers provide grade level objectives, expectancies and samples of types of work.	Teachers provide parents and students with course objectives expectations, grading policy and homework expectations and ask parents/students to complete study skills questionnaires.	Teachers provide parents and students with course objectives, grading policy, and homework expectations.
Teachers send positive notes or make positive telephone calls for every child during the first six weeks of school, and throughout the year.	Parents and teachers monitor student homework through an assignment calendars and binders.	Parents track student progress through binders and assignment calendars.
Teachers send home weekly progress reports on academic growth and behavior.	Teacher send home regular progress reports on academic growth and behavior.	Parents are notified at the first sign of grade slippage or behavior problems and plans are developed with the student and parents on how to improve.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR ALL LEVELS		
Teachers	Parents	Students
Increased mutual trust. Knowledge that family has common base of information for discussion of student problems and progress. Regular system for staying in touch with families. Greater knowledge of family expectations and means of supporting school success.	Increased mutual trust. Greater knowledge about what their child is to master at each grade level. Means of monitoring child's academic progress. Greater interaction with child's teacher at all grade levels.	See greater connection between home and school. Better understanding of what they are to learn. Systematic training in managing homework. Knowledge that parents and teachers are working together on their behalf, especially through planning conferences.

2. Home and School Support Strategies

Goal: To help all families feel welcome and to organize parent help and support.

EXAMPLES		
Elementary	Middle/Jr. High	High School
Organize back-to-school welcoming event that builds rapport between families and school staff. Hold regular awards assemblies that recognize students for a wide variety of academic achievements.	Organize a beginning-of-the-year Saturday Family Day where student clubs can raise funds, and parents and students can learn about study skills, adolescent development, college preparation, family communication skills, healthy living skills, etc. Invite parents to regular awards assemblies that recognize academic gains as well as other extracurricular areas.	Hold awards banquets or an evening for students who rarely get recognized.
Provide strategies by age or grade level through videotapes, telephone message systems, printed materials or newsletters for families to use at home to support their child's academic progress. Link these strategies to parenting tips. Organize back-to-school nights the first week or two of school so that parents can more quickly understand requirements, the school schedule, and how they can help. Link student performances more closely to school goals (e.g. musical performances that reinforce language arts goals; classroom dramatizations of historical events; student hands-on science and computer art demonstrations). Survey teachers regarding volunteer needs, and parents regarding skills, time, talents they can volunteer. Develop a parent/community speakers resource file to support teacher curriculum goals. Provide welcome/orientation packets for new families that list child care resources, health and food distribution centers, library hours, churches and synagogues, and self-help groups as well as essential school information. Recruit parent volunteers who would be willing to make home visits to distribute the packets and be a parent contact person.		

EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR ALL LEVELS		
Teachers	Parents	Students
Appreciate parents as partners. Respect for parents. Extra help available at school and in the classroom.	Feel welcome and encouraged to participate. See the relationship between extracurricular and school programs.	See parents and teachers as adults concerned about them. Opportunities to share their interests, knowledge and skills with parents.

3. Home and School *Learning* Strategies

Goal: To provide opportunities for staff and parents to learn how to collaborate effectively together, for parents to increase their parenting skills and how to help their child, and for teachers to learn more about families and their diverse cultures.

EXAMPLES		
Elementary	Middle/Jr. High	High School
Survey parents to identify areas in which they would like assistance. Provide calendars with daily activities for discussion by parents and their children. Provide opportunities for parents to be trained in home learning activities (e.g., reading at home, science activities).	Hold workshops for parents (and students) that will help families survive adolescence. Develop homework learning activities that require parents to review and discuss a school subject with their child. Offer study skills programs for parents and their children together.	Organize family workshops on college and career planning. Send home monthly career worksheets for parents and students to assist in exploring career options.
Develop alternate means of disseminating parent information (e.g. videotapes, telephone message systems, printed materials). Offer parenting, job training classes, ESL and other classes of interest to parents and organize self-help groups. At the high school level consider offering classes for parents, community members and students together. Identify other community agencies and inform parents about community opportunities for parent training.		

EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR ALL LEVELS		
Teachers	Parents	Students
Respect and appreciation of parents' competence.	Increased opportunities to interact with other parents.	Increase in needed skills.
Better designed homework and home learning activities.	Increased parenting skills and confidence in parenting.	Students see their parents as learners, valuing education.
Increased return on homework and more support from parents.	Ability to provide more support for child's school work.	Increased homework completion.

4. Home and School *Teaching* Strategies

Goal: To increase parent opportunities to teach their children and share knowledge with the school community.

EXAMPLES		
Elementary	Middle/Jr. High	High School
Provide opportunities for parents to tutor at home or at school.	Develop a family reading incentive program.	Organize a parent/student literature discussion group.
Organize a daily family reading program.	Provide class set of newspapers and invite parents and students to complete a series of discussions and worksheets on each section.	Provide opportunities for parents, students and community members to offer evening and after-school mini courses (e.g. teaching computer skills, music lessons, cooking, ethnic culture).
Ask parents to sign off completed homework and provide feedback on assignments.	Ask parents to sign off homework assignment calendars.	Organize combined activities for parents and students such as jazz groups, drama production, chorale groups, etc.
Offer study skills programs for parents and their children together.		
Provide an opportunity for parents to discuss with school staff what they see as the needs of their children and what they see as parents' needs vis-a-vis the school.		
Provide a setting where parents (and students) and staff share with the school community information about their different cultures and backgrounds.		

EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR ALL LEVELS		
Teachers	Parents	Students
School skills are reinforced at home.	Feel their knowledge, skills, and culture validated.	See themselves as capable learners and teachers.
Increased respect for parent teaching skills.	Participation in child's education.	More individual attention from adults and support for school work.
Understand parents' needs.		

5. Home and School *Advisory and Decision Making* Strategies

Goal: To recruit and train parent and teacher leaders to develop the knowledge base and collaborative skills to serve on restructuring committees, school site and advisory councils, PTA, or other parent organization boards.

EXAMPLES		
Elementary	Middle/Jr. High	High School
To build a pool of potential recruits for the SSC and/or SAC, have members call four parents each month to tell them about the work of the council, ask if they have concerns to be addressed, and invite them to the next monthly meeting. For an average sized council of ten members, forty parents a month would receive a personal call and learn firsthand what the council was about. Organize an evening or Saturday training for school council and PTA/parent group leaders in group process skills and important school information. Prepare a handbook with glossary of terms, school plan, techniques for being a constructive group member. Organize a legislators/local government officials' day on campus (middle/junior highs and high schools might involve feeder elementary schools). Invite parents and have parent leaders and students prepare questions or presentations about educational community issues. Regularly invite parents and students at the secondary level to share opinions through short, topical surveys included in each month's school newsletter. Discuss the results and possible actions at the next school site council or PTA/parent group meeting. When parents are upset, encourage them to bring a friend and come to the school to discuss their concerns. Active listening is the best way to diffuse anger and begin problem solving. Try to have available an ethnically matched school staff member who has status and mediation skills. Open the school to community groups such as Neighborhood Watch, planning groups, community action or self-help groups, afterschool clubs for students and adult education classes.		

EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR ALL LEVELS

Teachers	Parents	Students
Greater awareness of parent perspectives on school policy. Greater potential to solve critical school and community problems. Opportunity to develop own leadership skills.	Rights protected. Input into policies that affect child's education. Opportunity to develop leadership skills. Increased number of parents knowledgeable about the school.	Opportunity to learn how democratic institutions work. Opportunity to give input into school policies affecting them. Feelings of empowerment. Rights protected.

Turning Parents Away—Words and Deeds to Avoid

DON'T	DO
Communication	
• Contact parents only when there is a problem (especially if there has been no positive contact previously). • Talk down to parents. • Contact parents only after a problem has gotten out of hand. • Contact parents when you don't have a plan of action of what the school is prepared to do to help their child. • Send information only in English when parents speak other languages.	• Send lots of positive messages to parents. Reinforce the child's progress, especially if having difficulty with school work. • Show respect in your body language and words. • Contact parents at the first sign of problems such as absences, grade slippage, failure to return homework, etc. • Develop contacts and identify personnel and other community agencies that can provide support and services to families. • Identify personnel at the site, district, or community who can translate.
Parents as Supporters	
• Establish groups (cliques) that exclude other parents. • Keep parent groups isolated and separated from each other or from the life of the school.	• Recruit new parents and help them feel welcome and knowledgeable. • Develop an integrated approach so that all groups work on common goals.
Parents as Learners	
• Organize parent workshops in which parents have not been included in the planning. • Hold workshops at times the majority cannot or will not attend. • Hold workshops only in English when the majority speak other languages.	• Involve parents in planning all parent involvement activities. • Survey parents for the most convenient times. Offer the same workshop at alternate times. • Offer the same/similar workshop in different languages.
Parents as Teachers	
• Blame parents for low student achievement; ask them to assume major teaching roles.	• Help parents see how much their child has grown under the school's guidance.
Parents as Advisors and Decision Makers	
• Call a school council meeting on short notice, neglect to send an agenda in advance, or provide backup material. • Organize meetings where only the school staff does the talking.	• Develop a yearly calendar of meetings, send an agenda, backup material, and reminder notices before each meeting. • Indicate on the agenda, items that will require discussion and decision making.

Changing Problems Into Possibilities

Problem: No one at the school speaks the language of the parent.

Solutions:

1. Identify students who could serve as interpreters, other than the parent's own child.
2. Identify community members who would be willing to be volunteer or paid interpreters.
3. Recruit professionals and paraprofessionals who are native speakers.
4. Work with appropriate district offices to be sure that all critical school policies and information are translated into parent languages represented at the school.

Problem: Parents do not attend scheduled meetings.

Solutions:

1. Make sure the purpose of the meeting is clear and important to parents.
2. Involve parents in planning all parent meetings.
3. Inform parents that translations will be provided.
4. Provide at least three weeks advance notice of meetings and call or send a follow-up reminder. It is especially effective if parents of a particular language or ethnic group contact fellow parents.
5. Set an attendance target and brainstorm with teachers and parents how to meet the goal (e.g., how many parents have to be personally called to have 25 parents attend?).
6. Plan alternate ways of sharing information that will be presented at workshops with those parents unable to attend (e.g., by videotaping the session, providing a printed summary, asking parents who attend to call or discuss the workshop with another parent).
7. Have students write a letter of invitation to parents.
8. Provide incentives to teachers for encouraging parent participation.
9. Provide quality child care.
10. Involve students in the meeting for at least part of the time. Grade or class level meetings usually have the highest attendance.

11. Provide transportation.
12. Hold meetings (sometimes with the same agenda) at different places and different times so that all parents can attend. This is especially critical for VEEP and Magnet schools.
13. Plan parent education programs in a series of three to four workshops on a topic and hold them a week or two apart; then take a break.
14. Offer workshops targeted to a particular grade level or ethnic group, especially if the workshop needs to be offered in languages other than English.
15. Evaluate the meeting and use the information to plan future meetings.
16. Ask parents who attend meetings to be a buddy for one or two other parents and personally call, invite, and provide transportation for them to the meetings.
17. Review the Communication Checklist in the Home-School Partnership Planner to be sure all "the bases have been covered".

Problem: Teachers don't have time to involve parents.

Solutions:

1. Recognize teachers who have made time and have them share their tips and strategies at faculty meetings.
2. Develop schoolwide approaches that help all teachers (e.g., preprinted postcards and letters, assignment calendars, grade level homework packets, homework folders for primary grades, binders with tabs for upper grades and secondary students, parenting tip sheets that teachers can send to parents).
3. Use some staff development time to help teachers develop conferencing and other communication skills that increase their confidence in working with parents.
4. Use grade level or department teams to plan back-to-school curriculum meetings, grade level/course objectives, expectancies, and homework rules. It reduces the work any one teacher has to do and sends a consistent message to parents and students.
5. Make a commitment in the school site plan to call a set number of parents each week with positive messages, to send weekly/biweekly progress reports, and to publish a monthly class newsletter or send home lesson plans. Allocate resources to support the commitment (e.g., stamps, stationery for teachers, extra portable telephones for positive phone calls).
6. Ask your PTA or parent group to use some of their people and financial resources to support your teacher communication efforts. For example, the PTA/parent group can address and distribute to teachers preprinted postcards or letters for each child in each class.

Problem: Parents we most want to involve don't respond.

Solutions:

1. Establish a level of trust by contacting parents several times with positive messages about their child that do not need a response.
2. Be available to parents at times and days other than regular hours (e.g., one evening per week, one Saturday a month).
3. Make a home visit with the nurse, counselor, community liaison, or parent volunteer. Schedule a follow-up visit and bring a home learning activity to share.
4. Collaborate with other community agencies and leaders in reaching reluctant parents.
5. Hold parent meetings in the community instead of always at the school (e.g., church, youth centers, community associations, public library, etc.)
6. Arrange meetings around social events, such as potlucks and picnics.
7. Call parents and schedule a second meeting, when parents do not attend a scheduled meeting/conference. If that fails, conduct a telephone conference, make a home visit or use the U.S. mail.

Problem: The parent is not responding to school requests for assistance and drug and/or alcohol abuse is suspected.

Solutions:

1. Refer the child and family to the consultation team and work with the counselor and nurse. Involve child and siblings in site counseling both individual and group.
2. Inservice staff to raise awareness of signs of neglect or abuse and develop ways for the staff to support the child in class.
3. Help teachers realize that lack of parent follow through is typical in a family under stress, especially from drug and alcohol abuse and that a non-judgmental attitude toward the family will help them provide the support and help the child needs.
4. Set up parent contacts wherever the parent is willing to meet (eg., park, restaurant, parent's home), explore how the school can be of help to the family and recognize that repeated contacts may be necessary to build trust and rapport with the parent.
5. Identify nearby counseling agencies, community support groups such as Alcohol Anonymous, Alateen, Al-Anon, Narcotics Anonymous, etc., that are available to help parents and their families. Provide parenting classes on site that can help parents without singling them out.

A Planning Process for Developing Home-School Partnerships

All school site improvement plans must have a parent involvement component. The intent of this section of the handbook is to provide guidance and suggestions on how to strengthen your existing parent involvement component of your school-based site plan. Several worksheets are provided for you in a Home-School Partnership Planner included in Appendix A. Tips on how to use these planning sheets are discussed below.

Planning Steps

Step One: Establishing a Task Force

Ask a broad based representative group of teachers, support staff, parents, community members, and students at the secondary level, to serve on an ad hoc home-school partnership planning task force. Be sure at least one person from each existing group (SSC, SAC, bilingual advisory committee, GATE, PTA, or other parent group) is represented on the task force to serve as a liaison. A task force of 10 to 15 people can be productive if tasks are divided and everyone is made to feel he or she has a part.

The purpose of the task force is to:

- ✓ Document and evaluate the current level of home-school partnership activities.
- ✓ Develop a home-school partnership vision and goals for your school.
- ✓ Brainstorm ways in which partnership and parent involvement programs could be strengthened.
- ✓ Identify activities and training programs that will enable the school to enact the vision and to accomplish partnership objectives.

Note: Do not spend a whole year planning. It is important to see planning and implementing as a continual process.

Step Two: Assessment and Evaluation of Current Programs

Assess and record the school's current level of partnership activities. This task can be accomplished in several ways:

1. List current activities and ways that parents and teachers are fulfilling their partnership roles. There will be some overlap, but the lists will enable you to see where there might be gaps in your current program or activities. Be sure to identify communication and partnership activities that teachers have initiated at the classroom level as well as schoolwide activities.

2. Review data from previously administered parent/teacher/student surveys, if the data are not more than a year old. If no current survey data are available, consider administering one. Contact Integration Monitoring in the Community Relations and Integration Services Division for copies of surveys. Samples of surveys can also be found in Communicating with Parents, a resource book available at most sites.
3. Record important baseline data on the Assessment Forms in Appendix A. These forms can also be used at the end of the year to evaluate what has been accomplished. In addition, when program reviews such as WASC, PQ/IR and Integration Monitoring occur, this data will be valuable information for the self study.

Note: *Don't collect more data than you can use, but collect enough to know what should be the next steps.*

Step Three: Develop a Vision of Your Home-School Partnership

Creating a shared vision or mission statement can help in several ways. First, it helps staff, parents, community members, and students, at the secondary level, develop a common understanding of what is meant by a home-school partnership. Some may see parent involvement as parents coming to meetings or parents and community members volunteering at school. It is important for everyone to understand the breadth and scope of a comprehensive partnership program and how each type of activity can help students do better in school.

Second, a vision or mission statement can give focus and purpose to the partnership. Third, a statement helps the school set a goal to work toward.

1. Brainstorm with the task force ideas of what home-school partnerships should look like. Use the vision worksheet to guide the task force in thinking about and developing a vision statement.
2. Draft a vision or mission statement that captures the ideas shared in the brainstorming session.
3. Share the statement with parent, students, and staff by publishing it in the school newsletter and asking for comments and suggestions. Discuss the statement at a faculty/staff meeting.
4. Revise the statement after additional input has been received from all groups.
5. Print the vision or mission statement and post it in locations around the school.

Step Four: Developing an Action Plan

1. Have the task force brainstorm possible ways to meet identified needs. Be sure to use chart paper and record everyone's ideas. Don't evaluate them. Later the task force can review and decide which activities will be the ones to be written into the plan.
2. Decide whether it would be best to have one overall home-school partnership component or to develop an objective and plan sheet for each type of partnership activity.
3. Consider who should be responsible for implementing each activity. Do not give all the jobs to

one person (especially the principal or a resource teacher). Remember parents can assume a share of the responsibility for implementation.

4. Decide what training or support may be necessary, especially for staff if they are to be successful in implementing plan activities.
5. Decide what resources (material, people, and funds) will be necessary to accomplish partnership activities.
6. Submit the plan to the school site council or school advisory committee for approval and add the new parent involvement component sheets to your existing school site plan.
7. Ask for task force members who would be willing to serve as a smaller subcommittee of the school site council to monitor and assist in the implementation of the home-school partnership component.

Note: Develop both short range and long range activities. Don't take on more than you can do. It is better to plan small and build your program by reviewing and revising your plan every three to six months.

Step Five: Charting Progress

1. Use the last column on the assessment forms previously completed to chart your progress.
2. Review staff or parent evaluations of meetings or workshops collected throughout the school year and use the data as a basis for planning and/or improving future workshops.
3. Conduct a random written or telephone parent survey to evaluate levels of success of your home-school partnership programs.
4. Use the evaluation data to plan and improve next year's home-school partnership programs.

Part **IV** PARENT INVOLVEMENT
Follow-Up and Support

Finding Funds for Parent Involvement

When thinking about support for parent involvement efforts the following points should be considered:

1. A home-school partnership is a relationship in process rather than a particular event or program. This means that much of what needs to be done depends on a willingness and commitment to participate in the relationship—not on funds. Treating all parents with respect and courtesy does not cost any money and results in many benefits.
2. Some significant benefits can be realized for little or no cost:
 - a. A whole school staff might choose to work on a Saturday in order to conference with more parents in exchange for choosing another non-work day.
 - b. Staff responsibilities might be reorganized to allow time for a particular staff member to assume responsibility for some parent involvement activities.
 - c. At staff meetings, grade level or department meetings, spend at least one meeting on sharing strategies that have worked in communicating with parents.
3. Schools that have business/community partners through the Partnership in Education Program should brainstorm with their partner activities they would like to be involved in and potential resources, both financial and human.
4. School Improvement Program, Chapter 1, and other categorical funds and some Magnet and VEEP monies can be used to fund parent involvement efforts.
5. PTA and other campus parent groups may be willing to assist schools in funding specific parent involvement activities.
6. Schools may wish to apply for funding through grants. For example, the Parent Involvement Incentive Grant Program was requested and approved by the Board of Education to support the district's parent involvement policy. Funds are awarded to schools annually through a competitive grant process for innovative parent involvement projects.
7. Schools may want to work collaboratively with other schools in their cluster, especially with junior and senior high feeder patterns to plan and implement parent involvement activities in order to maximize benefits and conserve resources.
8. Making effective home-school partnerships a priority will require school resources (staff time as well as funds) to be reallocated. This may mean carefully rethinking how staff time and funds are currently being allocated.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Appendix A Home-School Partner- Ship Planner

How to Use the Home-School Partnership Planner

The planner is designed to assist schools in identifying the strengths and gaps in current home-school partnership efforts and in developing a plan of action. The planner consists of four parts: Vision Worksheets, Assessment Forms, Communication Checklists, and a Parent Involvement Component Planning Sheet.

Step 1: Develop a Vision

With existing groups and/or special focus groups of parents and staff develop a vision of what the school's home-school partnership should look like. This vision can then be used as a yardstick to evaluate current efforts and develop a component plan.

Step 2: Assess Current Efforts and Programs

Use the Assessment Forms and Communication Checklists to assess current efforts and practices. The forms address each of the major home-school partnership roles at both the classroom and school level*. A parent-teacher task force can be designated to collect the data. Appropriate sections can be duplicated and given to individual teachers to complete. Opinion data may also be collected through parent, teacher, and student surveys.

Step 2: Analyze the Data

Use the Assessment Forms, establish targets for growth in the "Desired Level" column. Increased levels do not have to be set for every area, but should be set in areas that are low or the staff and parents feel need to be strengthened. For example, if participation at the back-to-school night is only 60%, the "desired level" may be set at 75% for the following year. The next step would be to develop an action plan to meet that goal.

Step 3: Develop an Action Plan

Use the Parent Involvement Component Planning Sheet to develop a plan of action that addresses needs in at least two home-school partnership roles (e.g. communication and parents as teachers) and list activities needed for meeting the targets set in Step 2. Be sure to address both school and class level home-school partnership activities. The completed Component Planning Sheet should be incorporated into the total school improvement plan.

Step 4: Evaluate Progress

Midway through the year and at the end of the year, use the Assessment Forms and Component Planning Sheet to evaluate progress. Written or telephone surveys to assess parent and teacher perceptions and opinions should be developed or readministered to evaluate progress.

*Note: The Assessment Forms can be very valuable in documenting parent involvement efforts that will assist the school in the Chapter 1 Review, Program Quality Review, and Integration Monitoring. By completing the "Current Level" column, the school planning team will have a very accurate picture of parent involvement at the school. Completion of the "Level of Achievement" column, will clearly show the progress that has been made. This will be especially helpful in meeting the new Chapter 1 parent involvement requirements.

Home/School as Communicators Assessment Form

Activity/Program	Current Level*	Desired Level	Level of Achievement
<u>Schoolwide Communications</u> 1. Number of newsletters • Translations provided • Feedback forms or brief parent surveys included			
2. Parent initiated contacts with administrators • Number of contacts per month • Number of complaints per month • Number of complaints by ethnicity • Types of complaints			
3. Percent who attended parent-teacher conferences • Percent by ethnic group • Percent by grade level			
4. Number of conferences with counselors • Number initiated by parents • Number initiated by counselor(s)			
5. Number who attend 8th grade four-year planning conference			

*It is important to document whether or not each ethnic or language group in the school is equitably participating in all parent involvement activities.

Activity/Program	Current Level*	Desired Level	Level of Achievement
6. Percent who attend Back-to-School Night • Percent who attend by grade level • Percent who attend by department			
7. Percent who attend Spring Open House • Percent who attend by grade level • Percent who attend by department			
8. Positive communications to parents from principal • Letters, notes • Telephone calls • Post cards • Home visits • Report cards			
<u>Classroom Communications</u> (duplicate and distribute to each teacher for completion)			
9. Numbers of class newsletters • By grade level • By department • By special program (Bil., Sp. Ed., Magnet, etc.)			
10. Positive communications by teachers • Telephone calls • Letters, notes • Preprinted postcards • Feedback on homework • Notes, letters to students • Home visits			

*It is important to document whether or not each ethnic or language group in the school is equitably participating in all parent involvement activities.

Activity/Program	Current Level*	Desired Level	Level of Achievement
11. Number of contacts dealing with concerns • Telephone calls • Parent initiated conferences • Teacher initiated conferences • Parent initiated letters/notes • Teacher initiated letters/notes • Home visits			
12. Homework • Percent of homework completed • Number of complaints/concerns about homework			
13. Course objectives and expectations sent to parents • By grade level • By department			
14. Other _____ _____ _____ _____ _____			

*It is important to document whether or not each ethnic or language group in the school is equitably participating in all parent involvement activities.

Home/School as Supporters Assessment Form

Activity/Program	Current Level*	Desired Level	Level of Achievement
1. School activities • Types of programs (e.g., fundraisers, performances, awards ceremonies).			
2. Community use of school facilities • Frequency of use • Types of groups			

*It is important to document whether or not each ethnic or language group in the school is equitably participating in all parent involvement activities.

Activity/Program	Current Level*	Desired Level	Level of Achievement
3. Interagency cooperation • Number of agencies • Types of activities _____ _____ _____ _____			
4. Partnership in Education • Name of partner(s) _____ _____ _____ • Types of Activities _____ _____ _____ _____ _____			
5. Number of non-classroom volunteers (e.g. office, lunch duty, playground)			

*It is important to document whether or not each ethnic or language group in the school is equitably participating in all parent involvement activities.

Home/School as Learners Assessment Form

Activity/Program	Current Level*	Desired Level	Level of Achievement
<u>Parent Learning Opportunities</u> 1. Number of parent education workshops per year • Types of workshops offered • Average attendance at workshops • Percent attendance by ethnic group • Languages in which workshops are presented			
2. Number of informational workshops per year (e.g., regarding school programs) • Types of workshops offered • Average attendance per workshop			
3. Number of joint parent/child workshops per year (e.g., Family Math, Computer Night) • Average attendance per workshop			

*It is important to document whether or not each ethnic or language group in the school is equitably participating in all parent involvement activities.

Activity/Program	Current Level*	Desired Level	Level of Achievement
4. Number of parent education opportunities other than meetings (e.g., video, parent libraries, printed materials)			
<u>Staff Learning Opportunities</u> 5. Number of workshops per year related to home-school partnerships • Types of workshops _____ _____ _____ _____			
6. Materials provided to staff (e.g., understanding cultural and language differences, improving conferencing skills, designing homework)			
7. Other _____ _____ _____ _____			

*It is important to document whether or not each ethnic or language group in the school is equitably participating in all parent involvement activities.

Home/School as Teachers Assessment Form

Activity/Program	Current Level*	Desired Level	Level of Achievement
<u>Homework</u> 1. Homework policy available in different languages			
2. Amount of homework • Number of days homework assigned (by grade level/class) _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ • Average amount of time spent on homework (by grade level/class) _____ _____ _____ _____			
3. Number using after school homework help			

*It is important to document whether or not each ethnic or language group in the school is equitably participating in all parent involvement activities.

Activity/Program	Current Level*	Desired Level	Level of Achievement
<u>Home Learning Activities</u> 4. Types of home learning programs offered (e.g., Family Literature, Family Math, Family Computers, Family Science) • Number of parents/children participating (by ethnicity)			
5. Types of home learning materials provided _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ • Materials provided in different languages			
<u>Classroom/Media Center Volunteers</u> 6. Number of classroom volunteers by ethnicity			
7. Number of media center volunteers by ethnicity			
8. Number of volunteer hours worked per semester			

*It is important to document whether or not each ethnic or language group in the school is equitably participating in all parent involvement activities.

Home/School as Advisors, Advocates, Decision Makers Assessment Form

Activity/Program	Current Level*	Desired Level	Level of Achievement
<u>Parent Organizations</u> 1. List of parent organizations _____ _____ _____ • Number of members by ethnicity _____ _____ _____ • Number of board members by ethnicity _____ _____ _____			
2. Types of activities _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ • Average attendance			

*It is important to document whether or not each ethnic or language group in the school is equitably participating in all parent involvement activities.

Activity/Program	Current Level*	Desired Level	Level of Achievement
<u>School Councils</u> 3. Types of councils _____ _____ _____ _____ • Number of participants by ethnicity _____ _____ _____ _____			
4. Number of meetings per year • Average attendance			
5. Type of activities _____ _____ _____ _____ _____			

*It is important to document whether or not each ethnic or language group in the school is equitably participating in all parent involvement activities.

**What Will Your Partnership Program Look Like When
Your VISION Becomes a Reality?**

When your school has a full-fledged home-school partnership program in place to support student success:

How will parents, students, and school staff relate and interact with each other?

What kinds of programs and activities will be in place?

What will teachers and the school be prepared to do to assist and work with parents?

What will parents be prepared to do to assist and work with the school staff:

How will people "see" your vision in action?

Statement of Vision for Our Home-School Partnership Program

Write a statement of your school's vision based upon parents' and the school staff's beliefs regarding the purposes of schooling and how parents and staff can work together to achieve those purposes.

OUR VISION IS:

COMMUNICATIONS CHECKLIST

Directions: This worksheet is designed to help you evaluate the notification, preparation, content, and quality of face-to-face communications with parents. In each square (if appropriate to that item) put a "+" for above average, a "0" for average, a "-" for below average. This quick check method will help you see strengths and areas in need of improvement. Add other communications not listed or criteria you feel are important.

Face-to-Face Oral Communications	Early Publicity	Multiple Methods of Notification	Adequate Preparation	Clear Purpose for Meetings or Contact	Agenda of Questions to Aid Preparation	Childcare	Translators Required	Helpful to Parents	Focus on Child	Attendance Goal	
Classroom Orientations											
Back-to-School Nights											
Open Houses											
Parent Education Meetings											
Parent-Teacher Conferences											
Telephone Conferences											
Evenings with the Principal											
Coffee Klatches											
Home Visits											
Community Breakfasts											
Potluck Suppers											
Special Events											
Presentations to Community Groups											

COMMUNICATIONS CHECKLIST

Directions: This worksheet is designed to help you evaluate the frequency, quality, content, and distribution of your school's written communication. In each square (if appropriate to that item) put a "+" for above average, a "0" for average, a "-" for below average. This quick check method will help you see strengths and areas in need of improvement. Add other communications not listed or criteria you feel are important.

Written Communications	Frequent	Easy to Read	Neat and Attractive	Encourages Responses	Important Information	Focus on Academics	Timely Distribution	Adequate Distribution	Translations Needed		
Letters Home											
School Policies											
-discipline code											
-homework policy											
-health regulations											
-absences/tardies											
Course Requirements											
Meeting Notices											
Progress Notes											
Success Reports											
School Newsletters											
Class Newsletters											
Classwork											
Parent Surveys											
Learning Objectives											
Assignment or Activity Calendars											
Handbooks											
Classroom Policies											

Parent Involvement Component Planning Sheet

COMPONENT:

OBJECTIVE:	Person Responsible	Time Line	Program Code	Budget
ACTIVITIES:				
EVALUATION: To what degree was the objective accomplished?				